



The Honorable Dave Reichert
United States House of Representatives
1127 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

April 30, 2014

Dear Congressman Reichert,

On behalf of First Focus Campaign for Children, a bipartisan advocacy organization dedicated to making children and families the priority in federal policy and budget decisions, I would like to express our support for H.R. 4058: Preventing Sex Trafficking and Improving Opportunities for Youth in Foster Care Act. This bill takes an important first step in directing states to identify and collect data on the number of trafficked youth who come in contact with the child welfare system and strengthens supports for foster children and families by implementing best practices.

Data collection of runaways and trafficked youth in foster care is vital information for states and child welfare agencies to determine how to best serve this population. While some studies have been conducted at local levels, consistent data by state and on a national level still does not exist. Studies report that the number of sexually exploited children is estimated to be between 100,000-300,000 children, nationally. This is a huge range that states cannot use effectively to tailor policies to help trafficked children. In addition to collecting data on the number of runaways and trafficked youth, this bill would also compile information on children diagnosed with a special need, types of child care institutions used, and the extent of health and education services provided, which will aid states in assessing the needs of trafficked youth and allocate resources based on the demographics of foster youth in their states.

While identification, screening, and creating stronger supports for foster youth are important measures, we urge you to reconsider adding Section 204 back into H.R. 4058. Youth who age out of foster care face significant barriers, which include securing housing, gaining access to medical services, obtaining jobs and enrolling in college. Ensuring that youth have a copy of their birth certificate, a social security number, health insurance documents and medical records and a bank account set up will ensure stability for this population. Removing this provision will cause a great burden on youth and create inefficiencies for agencies that attempt to verify identities and supply documents to foster youth after they have aged out.

Thank you for your leadership in addressing the issue child trafficking through H.R. 4058. We look forward to its passage in the House in the upcoming weeks. If you have any further questions please contact Rricha Mathur, Policy Research Associate and Program Manager, at RrichaM@firstfocus.net.

Sincerely,

Bruce Lesley
President